

# Follow-up to an Unsatisfactory Coliform Sample

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## What is an unsatisfactory sample?

A sample is unsatisfactory when coliform bacteria are present.

## What action must be taken?

When an unsatisfactory sample result is received, a set of repeat samples must be collected within 24 hours. The purpose of the repeat samples is to confirm the presence of coliform bacteria in the system and to determine possible causes of contamination. **Do not** shock chlorinate the system before collecting repeat samples without prior approval by Department of Health (DOH).

Review your sampling procedure to assure that samples are taken correctly. (Refer to Coliform Sample Collection Method fact sheet.)

The number of routine samples collected monthly for your system determines the number of repeat samples you need to collect. Your system will follow one of the two examples below:

**For systems collecting ONE routine sample per month**, a total of **FOUR REPEAT** samples are required from the following locations:

1. The same tap as the original unsatisfactory routine sample.
2. An active service within five active connections upstream from where the original unsatisfactory sample was taken.
3. An active service within five active connections downstream from where the original unsatisfactory sample was taken.
4. Another location, such as at the source or right after the storage tank, that will provide useful information for determining a source of contamination. If you do not have a tap at the source or storage tank, choose another active service.

**For systems collecting TWO OR MORE routine samples per month**, a total of **THREE REPEAT** samples are required from the following locations:

1. The same tap as the original unsatisfactory routine sample.
2. An active service within five active connections upstream from where the original unsatisfactory sample was taken.

3. An active service within five active connections downstream from where the original unsatisfactory sample was taken.

If you cannot sample as outlined above or **if any repeat samples are unsatisfactory**, contact DOH.

**Thoroughly inspect the water system:** Try to identify potential sources of contamination, such as “openings” in the system and/or treatment equipment failure. Make any needed repairs to your system. (Refer to Troubleshooting Checklist for Coliform Contamination.)

**In the month following an unsatisfactory sample, a minimum of FIVE ROUTINE samples is required.** If you routinely take five or more samples each month, follow your regular schedule. If any of these samples are unsatisfactory, further investigation and more repeat samples are required.

### **For more information:**

#### **Northwest Regional Office – Kent**

Coliform Program: 253-395-6775 Main Office: 253-395-6750

#### **Southwest Regional Office – Olympia**

Coliform Program: 360-753-5090 Main Office: 360-664-0768

#### **Eastern Regional Office – Spokane**

Coliform Program: 509-456-2788 Main Office: 509-456-3115